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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 487 - JANUARY 25, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY

OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. EGYPT-ISRAEL. BOTH ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS YESTERDAY SEEM TO BE ATTEMPTING TO COOL THE HEATED RHETORIC OF THE LAST WEEK. THE EGYPTIAN PRESS, HOWEVER, DID NOT ALLOW PRIME MINISTER BEGIN'S ACCUSATIONS IN HIS KNESSET SPEECH TO GO UNANSWERED. HENCE:

(A) AL-AKBAR EDITORIALIZED THAT BEGIN'S ALLEGATION OF ANTI-SEMITISM COULD NOT CONVINCE A CHILD.

(B) THE EGYPTIAN GAZETTE SAID THE EGYPTIAN PRESS "NEITHER SUFFERS FOOLS GLADLY NOR WILL IT PUT UP FOR LONG WITH THE BASE AND DECEITFUL METHODS USED BY THE ISRAELI LEADERSHIP." IT DESCRIBED ITS CRITICISM OF BEGIN'S CONDUCT OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS AS "STRONGLY WORDED BUT NEVER ANTI-SEMITIC."

(C) A CARTOON IN AL-AHRAM SHOWED AN EGYPTIAN TELLING BEGIN, "DON'T SEEK EXCUSES. WE ARE NOT ANTI-SEMITIC. WE ARE ANTI-YOU."

(D) AL-AHRAM SAID BEGIN'S CHARGE OF ANTI-SEMITISM CAME UNDER THE HEADING OF "TERRORISM OF THOUGHT."

2. EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS, FOR THEIR PART, TONED DOWN THEIR SECRET

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RHETORIC. THEY STRESSED THE CONTINUING NATURE OF DISCUSSIONS. SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICERS COMMENTED THAT THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL COMMITTEES STILL EXIST. THE GENERAL TONE OF THE OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS WAS THAT THESE WERE DIFFICULT TIMES BUT NEGOTIATIONS WOULD RESUME. FURTHER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEGUN TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON EGYPT'S DESIRE TO OBTAIN AN AGREED STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES.

3. PRIVATELY, HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS SEEM PESSIMISTIC. SOME OF THEM SAW LITTLE BENEFIT IN RECONVENING EITHER THE POLITICAL OR MILITARY COMMITTEES UNTIL A BASIC CHANGE TOOK PLACE IN THE ISRAELI APPROACH. THEY NOTED THAT IN VIEW OF SADAT'S MAJOR CONCESSIONS ON THE NATURE OF PEACE, THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT HAD NOT EXPECTED TO BE NEGOTIATING OVER SINAI. THESE OFFICIALS BELIEVE EGYPT SHOULD MAKE IT CLEAR TO THE REST OF THE WORLD THAT ITS ACCEPTANCE OF ISRAEL AND MAJOR CONCESSIONS ON THE NATURE OF PEACE CAN BE REVOKED.

4. THEY ARE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE "UNWILLINGNESS" OF THE US TO RISK A CONFRONTATION WITH ISRAEL. WITHOUT SUCH

A CONFRONTATION, THEY DOUBT THAT THE MORE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES CAN BE RESOLVED. THEY WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE A MORATORIUM ON NEW ARMS SALES TO ISRAEL PENDING A SETTLEMENT, SINCE US ARMS TRANSFER POLICY IS SEEN AS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR BEHIND ISRAEL'S TOUGH STAND.

5. IN THE AFTERMATH OF BEGIN'S KNESSET SPEECH, ISRAELI MEDIA AND OFFICIAL COMMENTS HAVE BECOME MORE OPTIMISTIC REGARDING THE PROSPECTS FOR RESTARTING AT LEAST THE MILITARY COMMITTEE TALKS. "INFORMED SOURCES" ARE SAID TO EXPECT THAT ISRAEL WOULD MAKE AN EARLY MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION, AND EMBASSY TEL AVIV NOTED THAT THERE IS WIDE-SPREAD EXPECTATION THAT THE ISRAELI CABINET'S DECISION TO POSTPONE THE TALKS WOULD BE REVERSED, POSSIBLY AT NEXT
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SUNDAY'S CABINET MEETING OR EVEN SOONER.

6. SEEMINGLY SETTING THE STAGE FOR SUCH ACTION, ISRAELI OFFICIALS YESTERDAY WERE SAID TO BE CAREFULLY STUDYING THE TONE OF RECENT EGYPTIAN PRESS STATEMENTS. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO FORMAL GOVERNMENT REACTION, SOME OFFICIALS SAID THAT THE NEW EGYPTIAN STATEMENTS DID NOT AMOUNT TO THE SAME HARSH RHETORIC THAT BEGIN HAD SCORED IN HIS KNESSET ADDRESS AND THAT HE HAD STATED MUST BE TONED DOWN AS A CONDITION TO ISRAEL'S AGREEING TO SEND WEIZMAN TO CAIRO. SUGGESTING THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT LET THE LATEST ROUND OF EGYPTIAN MEDIA CRITICISM STAND IN THE WAY, DAYAN WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WILL SOON FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO RENEW" THE MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS.

7. THE APPARENT ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MILITARY TALKS MAY STEM IN PART FROM LESS THAN WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT WITHIN THE COALITION FOR THE CABINET'S DECISION ON SUNDAY TO "POSTPONE" THEM. SEVERAL MINISTERS REPORTEDLY DID NOT SYMPATHIZE WITH THE DECISION, DESPITE THE CLAIM OF UNANIMOUS APPROVAL, ACCORDING TO EMBASSY TEL AVIV. A FAIR AMOUNT OF SUB-SURFACE DISCONTENT IS THOUGHT TO EXIST WITHIN THE COALITION OVER BEGIN'S RECENT HANDLING OF PEACE EFFORTS. MANY DMC AND SOME LIBERAL PARTY KNESSET MEMBERS FEEL, THE EMBASSY COMMENTED, THAT BEGIN HAS OVERREACTED TO EGYPTIAN CRITICISM AND HAS ALLOWED HIS EMOTIONS TO INTERFERE WITH THE PRACTICAL NEGOTIATIONS.

8. ANOTHER FACTOR WHICH COULD INFLUENCE THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON WHETHER TO RESUME TALKS MAY BE THE LESS THAN WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT THE ISRAELI MEDIA HAVE GIVEN TO THE CABINET'S ACTION ON SUNDAY AND TO BEGIN'S KNESSET SPEECH.
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GENERALLY, THE ISRAELI PRESS HAS TREATED THE CABINET DECISION AS NECESSARY BUT HAS CRITICIZED BOTH SIDES FOR THEIR HANDLING OF THE BREAKDOWN. MOREOVER, MANY RECENT EDITORIALS SEEM TO BE CALLING ON BOTH SIDES TO END THEIR "WAR OF WORDS" AND TO RESUME DIRECT TALKS. (SECRET)

9. LEBANON. IN THE FIRST GROUND CLASH IN SEVERAL MONTHS CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN APPEAR TO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO CAPTURE THE PALESTINIAN-HELD TOWN OF BALAT YESTERDAY. SHARP CLASHES WERE REPORTED IN THE TOWN, BUT IT SEEMS THAT PALESTINIANS WERE ABLE TO REPULSE THE CHRISTIAN ADVANCE.

10. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN BEIRUT REPORTS THAT UNKNOWN ASSAILANTS RECENTLY ATTACKED THE BROTHER OF A PROMINENT SHIITE LEADER IN NABATIYA. THE ATTACK IS BEING ATTRIBUTED TO THE PALESTINIANS. MANY SOUTHERN LEBANESE MUSLIMS BELIEVE THAT SUCH ACTIONS ARE PALESTINIAN ATTEMPTS TO FORCE THE LEBANESE TO FLEE FROM THEIR VILLAGES.

„ EMBASSY BEIRUT REPORTS THAT THERE ARE RISING TENSTONS BETWEEN DRUZE AND CHRISTIANS IN THE SHUF AND THE METN. TWO IMPORTANT DRUZE LEADERS, INCLUDING WALID JUMBLATT, HAVE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING THESE TWO GROUPS. SOME DRUZE, HOWEVER, CLAIM THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENTS, IN AN EFFORT TO PREVENT DRUZE-CHRISTIAN RAPPROCHEMENT. (SECRET)

12. ISRAEL. ISRAELI NAVAL SHIPYARDS ARE CURRENTLY CONSTRUCTING A GREATER NUMBER AND VARIETY OF MAJOR COMBAT BOATS THAN EVER BEFORE. SIX GUIDED-MISSILE PATROL BOATS, INCLUDING THE FIRST EXAMPLES OF A NEW TYPE OF BOAT, ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT HAIFA, AND THE PROTOTYPE OF A NEW SMALL, MULTIPURPOSE PATROL CRAFT IS UNDERGOING SEA TRIALS IN THE RED SEA. SOME OF THE NEW BOATS PROBABLY ARE DESTINED FOR THE ISRAELI NAVY, AND THE ISRAELIS PROBABLY HOPE
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TO MARKET OTHERS ABROAD.

13. OF THE SIX BOATS NOW BEING BUILT, FOUR ARE RESHEFS AND TWO ARE ENLARGED VERSIONS OF THE RESHEF, OUTFITTED TO CARRY A HELICOPTER. THIS NEW TYPE BOAT REPORTEDLY WILL BE FASTER THAN THE RESHEF AND HAVE ABOUT TWO-THIRDS GREATER RANGE. WITH THE ADDITION OF THE

HELICOPTER PLATFORM, HOWEVER, THE BOAT WILL HAVE ROOM FOR ONLY FOUR ANTISHIP MISSILE LAUNCHERS. THE RESHEF CAN CARRY SIX TO EIGHT.

14. THE MODIFIED RESHEF WAS INTENDED FROM ITS CONCEPTION TO BE SOLD ON BOTH THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MARKETS. ISRAELI SHIPBUILDERS HOPED THAT THEY WOULD HAVE MORE SUCCESS IN ATTRACTING FOREIGN CUSTOMERS WITH THE NEW, LARGER BOAT THAN THEY HAD WITH THE SMALLER RESHEF, WHICH TO DATE HAS BEEN SOLD ONLY TO SOUTH AFRICA.

15. THE BOAT UNDERGOING SEA TRIALS IN THE RED SEA, CALLED THE DVORA, IS A MODIFICATION OF THE DABUR COASTAL PATROL BOAT, AND IS OUTFITTED TO CARRY TWO ANTISHIP MISSILES. THE CONVENTIONALLY ARMED DABUR IS ITSELF A COPY OF THE US SWIFT BOAT AND HAS BEEN PRODUCED IN ISRAEL SINCE THE EARLY 1970S. (SECRET) VANCE

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